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COCHRAN VA MEDICAL CENTER UPDATE:

*Official Veterans' Affairs Hearing To Be Held In St. Louis Tuesday, July 13*

(WASHINGTON, DC) - Congressman Russ Carnahan (MO-3) today asked U.S. Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki to proactively seek information from current and former employees of the Cochran VA Medical Center in St. Louis regarding safety lapses that exposed over 1,800 veterans from Missouri, Illinois and other states to blood-borne pathogens.

In a letter sent to Secretary Shinseki today, Carnahan noted that at least one former Cochran employee has produced email evidence that she told a supervisor about problems with the dental equipment sterilization process as early as August 2009 - six months before the VA addressed the problem; the employee was fired just two months after voicing concerns.

Carnahan urged Shinseki to proactively urge current and former employees to come forward with relevant information, and take concrete steps to make sure they are aware of existing federal whistleblower protections.

"As you know, when employees see coworkers who speak up lose their jobs, it can have a chilling effect," Carnahan wrote in his letter to Secretary Shinseki. "A thorough investigation depends upon witnesses who feel safe and secure in their ability to be candid and forthright, without fear of retaliation from supervisors. We must make sure employees who have information that is relevant to this matter are aware of their rights and feel comfortable coming forward."

On a conference call this morning, Carnahan announced that the U.S. House of Representatives Veterans' Affairs Committee will convene an official Congressional field hearing in St. Louis on Tuesday, July 13, to explore the Cochran safety lapses. The Committee plans to hear testimony from affected veterans, Cochran staff and administrators, and

representatives from the national Veterans' Administration. Further details on the time and location of the hearing will be announced next week.

Veterans and family members who may have further questions or concerns are urged to contact Congressman Russ Carnahan's office at 314-962-1523.

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